



PRESS RELEASE

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**MESCALERO APACHE MAN PLEADS GUILTY
TO FEDERAL ASSAULT CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – Paul Francis Hicks, 49, a member of the Mescalero Apache Nation who resides in Mescalero, N.M., pled guilty this afternoon to a two-count indictment charging him with assault with a dangerous weapon and assault resulting in serious bodily injury. Hicks entered his guilty plea without the benefit of a plea agreement in federal court in Las Cruces, N.M.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Hicks pled guilty to assaulting a Mescalero Apache woman by slashing her hand with a large hunting knife at the Mescalero Tribal Offices on March 1, 2012. As a result of the assault, the victim suffered tendon and nerve damage that required surgery to repair.

Court filings reflect that on March 1, 2012, Hicks provoked an argument with the victim, who worked at the Mescalero Tribal Offices. During the argument, Hicks drew a 12-inch hunting knife out of his jacket and threatened to kill the victim. When Hicks attempted to slash the victim's face, the victim attempted to defend herself by blocking the knife with her left hand. In so doing, the victim sustained a large laceration across the palm of her left hand.

Although Hicks fled from the scene of the assault, he was apprehended by Bureau of Indian Affairs police officers later that day and was taken into tribal custody, where he remained until he was arrested on federal charges on March 20, 2012.

At sentencing, Hicks faces a maximum penalty of ten years of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine on each of the two assault charges. Hicks was remanded into the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service after entering his guilty plea. He will remain detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the Las Cruces office of the FBI and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, Mescalero Agency, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Aaron O. Jordon of the U.S. Attorney's Las Cruces Branch Office.

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